

Llewellyn is committed to keeping our staff and customers healthy and safe, as well as being good corporate citizens, during this time. Click to read how we are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

# LLEWELLYN

New Worlds of Body, Mind & Spirit Since 1901

PRODUCTS / AUTHORS / ARTICLES / BLOGS / ENCYCLOPEDIA / SUBSCRIBE / CONTACT

HOME / ARTICLES / BROWSE ALL / CHAOS MAGIC: THE MISUNDERSTOOD PATH

POSTED UNDER [MAGIC & RITUAL](#)

## Chaos Magic: The Misunderstood Path

JANUARY 12, 2009 / BY ANDRIEH VITIMUS / READ TIME: 8 MINS



Recently at a [pagan](#) festival, I heard someone say, "I don't do [chaos magic](#), because I like being a friend to the trees and animals." This was an elder of the community. Of course I pointed out that this was a horrible misunderstanding about what chaos magic actually is. I myself work with [faeries](#), nature spirits, trees, and many other elemental forces that I might go so far as to call "friends." So what IS chaos magic?

It is quite possible that no two chaos magicians would agree on this, but even despite that point, chaos magic is generally not what many people think it is. I would argue there is no such thing as chaos magic. There are no sets of techniques that make up chaos magic; therefore it is not a system in and of itself. Chaos magic is an attitude, a philosophy that promotes experimentation, play, and creativity while discarding dogmatic rules. Chaos magic points out that the techniques more than the symbols are what matter and that our belief in a system is actually what makes it work. The attitude discounts the idea of absolute truth and focuses instead on results within the real world. Often chaos magicians would say "Nothing is true, everything is permitted," referring to the fact that you can theoretically do anything. The idea is to test different sets of techniques and figure out for yourself whether or not they work. This sort of experiential attitude fosters creativity and inventiveness and puts emphasis on results to "prove" a given set of techniques. Chaos magic is a "meta system," which means that it is a theoretical framework to fit other magical systems into, so the practitioners of those systems can more easily have a shared language to foster cross communication and experimentation across the various knowledge sets that different people present.

The word chaos is a tough word for some to swallow. Many people feel that chaos is simply disorder and generally feel that disorder is "bad" and to be avoided. However, the Online Etymology dictionary says the following:

### Chaos

Noun.

1. A state of extreme confusion and disorder
2. The formless and disordered state of matter before the creation of the cosmos
3. (Greek mythology) The most ancient of gods; the personification of the infinity of space preceding creation of the universe
4. (Physics) A dynamical system that is extremely sensitive to its initial conditions (chaos (n.d), 2008).

The term "chaos magic" is generally credited to Peter Carroll. If you read Peter Carroll, you can see that he loves mathematics and physics. The non-linear and mathematical definition of chaos is closer although not exactly what Peter Carroll had in mind; however, in *Liber Null* and *Psychonaut* there are references to what seems like point two in the definition. In fact, Peter Carroll often synchronizes many eastern and western [ceremonial magic](#) systems in *Liber Null* and *Psychonaut*. If we look at one definition of the Tao, we see: "There was something undefined and complete, existing before Heaven and Earth. How still it was, how formless, standing alone and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere with no danger of being exhausted. It may be regarded as the mother of all things. Truthfully it has no name, but I call it Tao." (Tsu, 1972)

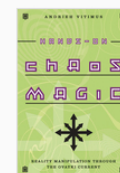
### About Andrieh Vitimus



Andrieh Vitimus (Ohio) has been a practicing magician in multiple systems for over twelve years. He has taught metaphysical classes at Alchemy Arts in Chicago and at conventions including Aeon, Ancient Ways, Real Witches ...

[READ MORE →](#)

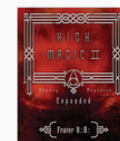
### Related Products



Hands-On Chaos Magic

\$15.39 US

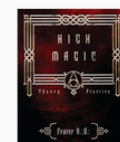
🛒 / ♥



High Magic II

\$34.99 US

🛒 / ♥



High Magic

\$34.99 US

🛒 / ♥

OTHER ARTICLES IN [MAGIC & RITUAL](#)

- [Paying Attention to the Magickal Wisdom of Plants](#)
- [High Magick & Initiatic Orders](#)
- [Preparation and the Golden Dawn](#)
- [Bodies of the Gods](#)

Definition two of the word and the interpretation of the Tao seem remarkably familiar. Most sensible chaos magicians would not agree that chaos is "destruction and evil," but would agree to chaos being formless and might even agree that the apparent order of things is merely an arbitrary structure that we perceive. At a quantum level, they might be right (Arntz, 2004). For most actively practicing mature and serious chaos magicians, "Chaos" then is much closer to the mathematical systems of non-linear dynamics or the primal force from which we build the rhythms of the magic. The type of magic, however, follows other similar post-modern tendencies. Post-Modern literature, art and music, quantum physics, chaos mathematics, and other examples all clearly show a movement away from truth. All of these recent developments stress the importance that the observer has in determining the outcome or meaning. It should be no surprise then, that in the greater culture of the west, the similar notion of the impact of the observer is represented in and by chaos magic.

The most telling thing about a chaos magician is their ability to change their beliefs and paradigms at will. This is a complete change of perspective on the world that they live in to be able to see their reality from a different point of view. If you think about it, this would mean one day a chaos magician might be a Christian, while the next week they would be a [Buddhist](#). These two philosophies are radically different in their orientation towards the world and an adoption of either worldview would have implications towards the person's daily actions and attitudes. Chaos magic will demand that the practitioners be able to meaningfully switch between any beliefs about themselves, others, and religious beliefs. To the chaos magician, beliefs are choices. Belief is the tool that empowers the magic. In practice, this is extremely difficult to do. Chaos magicians have to constantly de-condition their minds to remove old patterns and beliefs and instill new ones. This takes practice, mental discipline, and dedication. Since the idea is that there is no right way or absolute Truth, the practitioner is left with the litmus test of real world results to defend their rituals, techniques, and beliefs. This makes chaos magic, in practice, one of the most difficult, grounded, and demanding magical paths if practiced in the way recommended by [Liber Null](#) and [Psychonaut](#) (Carroll, 1987). In fact, in my book [Hands-On Chaos Magic](#) I provide extensive exercises and techniques to de-condition the mind and facilitate movement past any set of beliefs that a magician would like to get past.

Many of the ideas of chaos magic have, in fact, filtered into the general [occult](#) and pagan community. The idea that the words of a [ritual](#) are not important but the intent is the most important aspect of ritual is a direct consequence of chaos magic theory. Additionally, the eclectic idea that you can combine entities from different cultures in the same ritual is a practice lifted from chaos magic philosophy. Many of the newer occult books, such as Michelle Belanger's [Walking The Twilight Path](#) and Taylor Elwood's [Space/Time Magic](#) combine a synthesis of different techniques from different cultures to create something new and powerful. I must say, I enjoyed both books, but neither book would have been possible without some adoption of chaos magic theory to loosen the dogmatic bounds of "the right way" and allow for creative magical experimentation. If there is only one way to do something, one truth, these tremendously creative works would not be possible. In fact, while some people take issue with the word "chaos," they themselves are using magical theory and techniques derived from early chaos magicians.

In practice, most mature and serious magicians who practice chaos magic find it extremely innovative, revolutionary, and well grounded. Chaos magic forces practitioners to continually change and transform. The reliance on results-orientated magic forces people to get better and get results when needed or re-examine their methods. Although there are a lot of different opinions on the matter, this freedom is really a double-edged sword. Many seem to treat chaos magic as some sort of religion—to the extent that, in their classes, they may even talk about the difficulty of integrating chaos magic with a [Wiccan](#) ritual. This completely goes against what is presented as "chaos magic" in books such as [Liber Null](#) and [Psychonaut](#). Chaos magicians should be able to have the mental flexibility to take on Wiccan beliefs—or any other beliefs—fully and without hassle. To have difficulty doing so would imply that self work was required. Likewise, chaos magic has taken on sinister reputations because some chaos magicians who will entirely and only work with darker powers and paradigms. Of course, again, this is a limitation against the idea of being completely mentally flexible.

Several people, such as Anton Channing, and occasionally myself as well, prefer to be called just "magicians." In fact, I originally did not want to call my book [Hands-On Chaos Magic](#) at all, because of the negative reputation that chaos magic has gotten both as being exclusively dark and because of the general magical sloppiness that some chaos magicians on the Internet tend to show. It is time to reclaim the word. Chaos magic is not dark or light. It is a difficult magical attitude that offers no certainty, requires mental flexibility, and demands verification grounded in physical results. The flip side of this freedom is that it allows the magician the flexibility to play with the universe and see how the universe responds. Magic becomes entirely a creative act. In [Hands-On Chaos Magic](#) all the exercises, techniques, and methods are given to the reader as things that have worked for me as well as others in the past. It is a set of foundational materials to help readers on their own adventures of playing with the universe and to help them develop their own sets of techniques. It is a way to break down various techniques to develop better and more effective magic for themselves. In these uncertain times, people deserve solid methods for developing more reliable and life changing results. Using the attitude of non-dogmatic experimentation, testing, and validation, chaos magic provides a framework to improve one's results to achieve whatever outcomes you desire.

## Bibliography

## Recent Articles



### Getting Started with Candle Magic

July 26, 2021



### Bombshells with Broomsticks: Introducing Spinstress Craft: Magick for the Independent Witch

July 19, 2021



### Invoking Hekate with Shakespeare

July 16, 2021



### How to Meditate with Crystals: Simple Ways to Change Your Life

July 12, 2021

Arntz, W. (Writer), & Arntz, W. (Director). (2004). *What the Bleep Do We Know?* [Motion Picture].

Carroll, P. (1987). *Liber Null and Psychonaut*. York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc.

chaos (n.d). (2008, 11 06). Retrieved 11 06, 2008, from Online Etymology Dictionary:  
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/chaos>

Tsu, L. (1972). *Tao Te Ching*. (G.-F. F. English, Trans.) New York: Vintage Books.

161,482 VIEWS

SHARE: [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [p](#) [e](#) / [p](#) PRINT

PRODUCTS

- Almanacs & Calendars
- Astrology
- Body & Soul
- Español
- Fiction
- Gifts & Accessories
- Magick
- Nature-Based & Pagan
- Supernatural & Parapsychology
- Tarot
- Young Adult

BROWSE

- Products
- Authors
- Articles
- Blogs
- Encyclopedia
- Subscribe

CORPORATE

- About Us
- Our Imprints
- Careers at Llewellyn
- Dedication to Diversity
- Permissions

CONTACT US

- FAQ
- Customer Service
- Returns
- Free Catalog
- Contact an Author
- Publicity
- Author Submissions
- Art Submissions
- Report Piracy
- Privacy Policy
- Cookie Policy
- For Booksellers

YOUR ACCOUNT

- Account Overview
- Your Shopping Cart
- Your Orders
- Your Backorders
- Your Returns
- Change Your Password
- Change Your Address

